

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Protecting Coastal Scenic Resources

Protection of the scenic resources of the coastal zone is a central part of certified LCPs. As plans have been carried out, significant public views to and along the shoreline and critical scenic views have been protected. However, over time, the incremental approval of individual developments, including minor additions and maintenance activities, may have resulted in the cumulative degradation of public views and scenic resources. It is important that the LCP updates reassess the critical views and scenic landscapes to be protected and refine measures to ensure their protection.

➤ ***What should an updated scenic resources section include?***

When beginning an LCP update, it is important to undertake new visual assessments to document how development may have encroached on key public views and scenic areas. An updated LCP should identify and map critical viewsheds, scenic resources and special communities to be protected based on more current information. And, if development previously authorized has impacted public views and scenic resources, revisions to policies and ordinances to avoid further encroachment and to mitigate impacts should be included in the LCP. You should also consider the extent to which development patterns in relatively undeveloped landscapes may affect public views from coastal waters, in an effort to avoid the cumulative degradation of such views.

➤ ***Where can I read some examples of updated scenic policies?***

For examples of some updated Scenic Resource provisions, see the City of Malibu LUP policies pages of the LUP at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/ventura/malibu-lup-final.pdf> and the City of Malibu Zoning Ordinance provisions at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/ventura/malibu-lip-final.pdf>.

➤ ***What are some key issues in scenic resource protection?***

The following highlights some of the most important new information that should be considered in updating policies for protecting scenic resources.

◆ **Identification of Special Communities**

During the initial certification process, many LCPs identified popular destination points as special communities (see box below). When updating

Review the principal Coastal Act policies concerning scenic resources at Sections 30250, 30251 and 30253. These statutes can be found at: <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/coa/statact.pdf>

Coastal Action Section 20253(5) states: "Where appropriate, protect special communities and neighborhoods which, because of their unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreational uses."

your LCP, you have the opportunity to reexamine and adjust the boundaries of the scenic and special areas that warrant protection. You may also strengthen the measures used to protect the special communities already identified. A good example recently approved by the Coastal Commission is the certification of the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea LCP, which includes a comprehensive set of policies and ordinances designed to protect the special historic character of Carmel exhibited through many of its smaller cottages and informal streetscape. Staff reports for the LUP that was approved with suggested modifications on March 6, 2003 are at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/sc/cmllup-r3.pdf> and the Implementation Plan approved with suggested modifications on February 20, 2004, at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/sc/F5c-2-2004.pdf>.

◆ Improving Scenic Assessment

Updated LCPs should incorporate the newer techniques and requirements for identifying critical viewsheds and for assessing the impacts of proposed development. Particular attention should be given to views to and from public recreation areas, including coastal waters where applicable. This should include documenting existing views, staking the location of structures to assess potential encroachment and detailing any proposed screening through vegetation or building materials.

◆ Maintenance of Visual Screening

LCPs should ensure that avoidance of impacts to scenic resources through site selection and design alternatives such as reducing height and bulk of structures is required as the preferred method of addressing impacts over landscape screening. However, where landscape screening is applied, absent requirements to protect public views over the long term, landscape screening may impact protection of public views. If vegetation is not maintained, it may grow to block public views. Therefore LCP updates should require that the only allowable landscaping is with low growing species that will not obscure or block public views. This could be accomplished by including a policy requiring landscaping plans. For existing landscaping, the LCP should require that it is maintained so as to not block any public views as vegetation matures while at the same time avoiding impacts to any existing habitat.

For some discussion of these issues concerning protection of scenic resources, see the City of Malibu LUP policies pp. 113-120 at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/ventura/malibu-lup-final.pdf> and IP ordinance provisions of chapter 6 at <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/ventura/malibu-lip-final.pdf>. Another resource is: Wendelyn Martz, *Preparing a Landscaping Ordinance*, 1990, Planning Advisory Service.

◆ **Telecommunications Facilities**

Cell tower proposals, which can have significant visual impacts, have emerged since most of the LCPs were written. There are both legal and policy considerations in addressing these in an LCP update. Be sure to check Federal law requirements as LCP provisions must be consistent with those.

There are some examples of LCPs with specific cell tower provisions:

- ❑ Monterey County LCP at <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/pbi/docs/ordinances/Title20/20.64.310.htm>, and
- ❑ Santa Cruz county LCP Section 13.10.660--Regulations for the siting, design, and construction of wireless communication facilities in <http://ordlink.com/codes/santacruzco/index.htm>.

Another useful reference is the *National League of Cities and APA, Siting Cellular Towers*, 1997; B. Blake Levitt, ed., *Cell Towers*, 2000, New Century Publishing.